Name: _____ Date: _____

A Balloon Called Red Titan

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 677 words

On Thanksgiving morning in 2020, a giant balloon floated in the Macy's parade in New York. It was new. It was 51 feet long and 42 feet tall. It had a mask on its face. Its name was Red Titan. The parade was on NBC from nine until noon.

Who is Red Titan? Macy's said he is based on an alter ego. An alter ego is a second self that a person plays. Think of a hero with a secret name. The person here is a YouTube star named Ryan Kaji. Red Titan is his masked alter ego.

To meet Red Titan, start with a page on YouTube. In 2015, a page called Ryan ToysReview began there. On YouTube, a channel is a page that holds one person's clips. This one was about toys. A clip where someone opens a new toy and shows it off is called an unboxing. Now it is called Ryan's World.

On YouTube, you can subscribe to a channel. That means you follow it. In 2018, a TV show said that Ryan's channel had over 12 million subscribers. A subscriber is one account that follows the channel. YouTube says that spam accounts and closed accounts do not count in the total.

That year, Ryan went to the Toy Fair in New York. It is a big show where toy firms show off new toys. A firm named pocket.watch and a toy firm named Bonkers Toys showed toys made with him. There were toy cars, figures and a fire truck.

Next came TV. In 2019, Nickelodeon said it would make a show called Ryan's Mystery Playdate. It would have 20 episodes. In each one, Ryan and his cartoon pals, Gus the Gummy Gator and Combo Panda, tried tasks and puzzles. The puzzles were clues to who his mystery playdate was.

The show kept going. It began in 2019. In 2021, Nickelodeon said it had ordered 20 more episodes for a fourth season. That made the season 30 episodes long. The season was called Level Up. It moved to a new set outside, with bigger challenges.

Back to the balloon. Macy's said that artists at its own Parade Studio designed Red Titan. It said there were clips that show how the balloon was made. It was 51 feet long, 28 feet wide and 42 feet tall. Macy's said he was the first YouTube creator in its parade.

The day after the parade, a new special for Ryan began. It was on a kids' streaming site called Amazon Kids+. It was named Super Spy Ryan. It was a hybrid, which means a mix. Part was live action. Part was cartoons. A team in Japan made the cartoons.

The balloon came back. In 2022, the firm that works with Ryan said Red Titan flew in the parade for the third year. It said he was still the only one based on a YouTube star. That is the

firm's claim. It stops being true if a parade adds another one.

In August of 2024, a movie came out in U.S. theaters. It was Ryan's World the Movie: Titan Universe Adventure. A firm said it would play on more than 2,100 screens. In the story, Ryan is pulled into a magic comic book. He has to become Red Titan, a hero, to rescue people trapped in it. A team in Japan made the cartoons again.

A movie is not made like a clip for YouTube. Ryan told YouTube's blog how his clips are made. They are filmed on a phone. A scene is often shot once. The movie had a script and a huge crew. He said the big lesson was patience. The lights, script and helpers made it take longer than he thought.

Red Titan is Ryan's alter ego. In 2020 he floated in a parade as a balloon 42 feet tall. In 2022 he flew a third time. In 2024 he was the hero of a movie in theaters in the United States. It all grew from a channel that began in 2015 with toy clips.

Questions

1. Why does the book say the claim about the only character based on a YouTube star could stop being true?

A. The balloon could be taken apart
B. A parade could add another character based on a creator
C. Ryan could change his name

2. What does it mean to subscribe to a channel on YouTube?

A. To pay for every video
B. To make a video of your own
C. To follow the channel

3. In this book, what is a hybrid special like Super Spy Ryan?

A. Part live action and part animation
B. Only cartoons
C. Only real people

4. Why might a movie take Ryan longer to make than a usual video?

A. It was filmed on a phone
B. It had a script, lights and a big crew
C. It had no cartoon parts

5. Which service showed Super Spy Ryan on November 27, 2020?

A. Amazon Kids+
B. The Roku Channel
C. Peacock

Words to know

channel: video page
subscribe: follow a channel
hybrid: a mix
script: written lines
patience: calm waiting

Answer key: A Balloon Called Red Titan

1. B. A parade could add another character based on a creator
2. C. To follow the channel
3. A. Part live action and part animation
4. B. It had a script, lights and a big crew
5. A. Amazon Kids+